

27 FEB 1959

Mr. Hugh S. Cumming, Jr.
Director, Bureau of Intelligence
and Research
Department of State
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Cumming,

As Chairman of the USIB Committee on Procurement of Foreign Publications, I have been requested on several occasions to advise libraries on the problem of negotiating exchange of publications with certain foreign countries with whom the United States does not have diplomatic relations. My replies to these requests have been invariably that U.S. Government libraries are precluded from such negotiations without the express approval of the State Department.

The countries under consideration are Communist China, East Germany, Bulgaria, North Korea, North Viet Nam and the Mongolian People's Republic. The Library of Congress has had, for example, oral permission from the Department of State to continue existing exchanges with East Germany and Bulgaria. There also exist variations in the interpretation as to what body, whether government, quasi-official or private, can be the recipient of the exchanges abroad.

During the course of the 24 February 1959 meeting of our Committee, we had a thorough discussion of the whole problem, and I was instructed to write you, requesting an official ruling on the subject. Among others, the following facts were mentioned: a) exchange is an important source of procurement for U.S. Government libraries (the Library of Congress has over 17,000 exchanges world wide; the Department of Agriculture Library receives about 7% of its publications via exchange) and b) libraries are not receiving important publications from these countries in such fields, for example, as botany, irrigation, soils, etc. Most of these publications are not available through any source other than exchange.

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It cannot be over-emphasized that intelligence is dependent for its background information on the libraries available to us. The better collections these libraries have, the better our intelligence. As a case in point, we have invited as members of our Committee in recognition of their substantial role in procurement, representatives from the three national libraries: the Library of Congress, National Library of Medicine and the Department of Agriculture Library.

We realize that exchanges with foreign countries with whom the United States does not have diplomatic relations have many implications of policy beyond our purview. We would, therefore, appreciate a statement of policy from the Department of State on the matter of exchanging publications with each of the six countries mentioned above.

Sincerely yours,

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Chairman, Committee on Procurement
of
Foreign Publications

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